

# Chapter Two: How to Play

## Playing a Familiar: Your Job

This chapter is for players who are going to control a familiar (which is to say, everyone who isn't the Master). If that's you, then this is your job:

- **Follow the rules laid out in this chapter.**
- **Play your familiar to the best of your understanding.**
- **Be a fan of the other players' familiars.**

You'll spend a lot of time in your character's head, so to speak, so it's natural to root for them. And you should certainly do so! You should be their number one fan. But you shouldn't be afraid of loss, failure, and setback. A familiar's life—their story—isn't intended to be a leisurely stroll through a moonlit garden. It's messy, it's violent, it's difficult, it's unfair, and all of those things make the triumphs you *do* accomplish all the sweeter. The objective of the game isn't to successfully complete as many of the tasks your vampire patron gives you as possible, it's to *tell a memorable story*. Every memorable story has parts where things go absolutely to shit. Lean into those moments.

What I mean to say is, don't be afraid of your familiar's failings. Embrace those moments when the little voice in your heart says "This is exactly the kind of situation where Erszebet would do something really stupid, like throw a drink in that cop's face."

For what it's worth, I built **the Renfield Diaries** to fuck with your character pretty often, but also to have a *lot* of crash space and to be fairly forgiving. It's *really* hard to get your character killed without wanting it to happen, even in the face of seriously overwhelming odds and opposition. This is the kind of game that would rather radically escalate your story than cut it short prematurely. So take risks, start fights, and lean into the chaos. It's more fun that way.

You also need to remember that, as cool as *your* familiar is? No cool character reaches their full potential in a vacuum. Savor moments to pass the spotlight over to the other players. *The game* emerges from *the conversation*, you can't have a conversation all by yourself.

Anyhow, that's your job: say what your character would do, dig what the other players are saying, and when it's time to use a rule, use the rule. Pretty simple.

## First Rule: The Red Rule

*This is a game about bringing horror into your story—not into your gaming group.* If someone in the group is uncomfortable with certain content, then the game doesn't go there, not even if I wrote another rule saying it does.

This is a game about a group of people in an abusive, dysfunctional relationship with a monster. Tonally, it's intended to be dark, but not *harrowing*. The focus is more on the exciting, absurd, and horrifying situations you find yourself in while trying to carry out the vampire's bidding than, say, the vampire creatively punishing a character for their failures, or just because it's bored and ancient and awful. If we're being honest, yes, that's the kind of thing vampires do, but this isn't a game about swinging the camera in for an extreme close-up on scenes from an Eli Roth film. "Soft R-rating" is about where the tone's intended to land.

This goes double for sexual content. If everyone at the table (including all participants *and bystanders*) isn't cool with the game "going there," it doesn't go there. Speaking as the designer of **the Renfield Diaries**: You are not compromising the intended experience by establishing boundaries for yourself. If someone in the group does so, respect them; that person is extending their trust to you.

Okay, now on to the standard "pick up the dice and do this when that happens" portion of the rules.

## Rolling Dice

You only ever roll dice when someone says something to trigger a move. Then you pick up two six-sided dice, roll them, add them together, add an Attribute modifier, and that's your result. If it's 6 or under, it's a miss. 7-9 is a success, but with some kind of complication. 10+, you get what you're after.

The Master never rolls dice.

## Modifiers

You can never put a bigger modifier than +3 or -3 on a roll, no matter how many modifiers might be piling in at once.

When a move says to *carry +1 forward*, you add a +1 bonus to your next move. When it says to *carry +1 forward ongoing* it means to add a +1 bonus until whatever's adding the bonus stops doing that.

## Disasters

When you miss on a move, you can tell the Master you want to convert the miss into a *disaster*, and get 1 experience. How exactly a disaster manifests is entirely up to the Master, but something *bad* is going to happen.

Be aware that the Master can make a miss hurt as bad as they want to even if you don't ask for a disaster; they're under no obligation *not* to open up with both barrels any time they think it would push the story somewhere interesting. All converting to a disaster does take away the Master's option of letting you off light.

## Attributes

You have four Attributes, which you combine with the results of two six-sided dice to find the outcome of rolls. Your Attributes will be rated somewhere between -1 to +3, depending on your *role playbook* (see Chapter Five) and how you've developed your familiar.

The Attributes are:

**Muscle:** Strong, fast, tough, fit. Governs the following moves: *Flex, fuck them up, protect someone*.

**Will:** Forceful, steadfast, unflappable, stubborn. Governs the following moves: *Bare your fangs, stand your ground*.

**Charm:** Smooth, sophisticated, insightful, sexy. Governs the following moves: *Fast talk, slow things down*.

**Smarts:** Clever, cunning, sharp, quick-witted. Governs the following moves: *Cut and run, do something shady, work a system.*

## Making Moves

When a specific rule interjects itself into the story because of something you said in the conversation around the table, you are *making a move*. This usually, but not always, involves picking up and rolling some dice.

You *have to* use a move whenever the conversation—which is to say, the story—demands it. What that means is that when some kind of stinking dead thing you’ve never seen before is smashing down the door of your motel room and you say “Fuck *that*, I grab the idol we found in the swamp, then bail out the window in the bathroom and make a run for the car,” you are now using the *cut and run* move because that’s what you’ve made the story say. You pick up the dice and follow the rules that happen when you *cut and run*.

You *can’t* use a move if the story doesn’t demand that you use it. If you’ve been arrested breaking into a reporter’s apartment and find yourself cuffed in the back of a police cruiser, you can’t just say “I *cut and run*” to get yourself out of that predicament. The moves always flow from the story; the story doesn’t change because you want to use a move.

## Basic Moves

Every PC can do all the basic moves. Some of these moves will talk about Edges, Conditions, harm, or the Dark. Those things are all explained in the next section. For now, just keep the following in mind:

- Getting an Edge on someone is good. Someone having an Edge on you is bad.
- Conditions can be good or bad but are usually bad for the person they get stuck on.
- Inflicting harm on your enemies is good. Suffering harm is bad.
- When the Dark advances, you’re getting into trouble. When the Dark retreats, you’ve got extra breathing room.

## Muscle Moves

These moves add your muscle modifier to their roll.

### Flex

When you perform some feat of strength, agility, or toughness with serious consequences for failure, roll with muscle. On a 10+, you succeed at the action and choose one: you erase a Condition; you carry +1 forward to your next move. On a 7-9, you succeed, but choose one: You take 1 harm; your success is incomplete or flawed in some way; the Dark advances.

### Fuck them up

When you try to hurt or kill someone, roll with muscle. On a 10+, you inflict harm as established, and pick one: the harm is great (add +1 harm); you gain an Edge on your enemy; you inflict a Condition on your enemy. On a 7-9, you inflict harm as established but the Master chooses one: they gain an Edge on you; they deal you harm in return; the Dark advances.

### Protect someone

When you protect someone else from harm, roll with muscle. On a 10+, choose two: The harm inflicted is reduced by 1; you deal harm as established to the attacker if they decide not to abort their attack and push it through anyway; they must target you instead; you give the attacker a Condition. On a 7-9, the attacker chooses one: The harm inflicted is reduced by 1; they target you instead.

## Will Moves

These moves add your will modifier to their roll.

### Bare your fangs

When you attempt to shut someone down, get them to back off their current course of action, or intimidate them, roll with will. On a 10+, PCs have to *stand their ground* and NPCs freeze up. Additionally, choose one: give them a Condition; they lose an Edge on you; you gain an Edge on them; the Dark retreats. On a 7-9, choose one: they have to *stand their ground* (PCs) or freeze up (NPCs); give them a Condition.

### Stand your ground

When you stand your ground in the face of intimidation, hardship, pain, pressure, fear, or overwhelming despair, roll with will. On a 10+, you stand your ground and choose one: remove a Condition; carry +1 forward to your next move in the scene; get an Edge on whoever tried to put the pressure on you. On a 7-9, you remain resolute, but the Dark advances.

## Charm Moves

These moves add your social modifier to their roll.

### Fast talk

When you manipulate or seduce someone, roll with charm. If you succeed, NPCs will do what you ask if you give them a bribe, a threat, or a motive; PCs get 1 experience for doing what you want. On a 10+, you also choose one: you gain an Edge on them; you give them a Condition. On a 7-9, you overplay your hand just a bit and they get an Edge on you.

### Slow things down

When everything's about to go to hell in a handbasket and you try to de-escalate the situation, roll with charm. On a 10+, you get enough breathing room to try something to change the course of events, and carry +1 forward to your attempt. On a 7-9, you get a bit of breathing room, but things are still on the verge of getting worse, and whoever is present that you would least want to get an Edge on you gets one.

## Smarts Moves

These moves add your smarts modifier to their roll.

### Cut and run

When you try to escape from danger, roll with smarts. On a 10+, you get away and end up in a safe place. On a 7-9, you get away, but the Master chooses one: you cause a big scene; the scariest person present gets an Edge on you; you lose something along the way; the Dark advances.

### Do something shady

Whether lifting someone's wallet, breaking into a museum, or planting evidence in a car, when you *do something shady*, you roll with smarts. On a 10+, you succeed and choose two: your activity goes completely unnoticed, leaving behind no incriminating traces; you carry +1 forward; the Dark retreats. On a 7-9, you succeed and choose one: your activity goes completely unnoticed, leaving behind no incriminating traces; the Dark *doesn't* advance.

## Work a system

Whether searching (or hacking) a computer database to find (or alter) information, working out which palms to grease to set up a meeting with a city councilman, or reading market trends to manage your vampire master's stocks, whenever you *work a system*, you roll with smarts. On a 10+, you achieve your goal, and choose two: you achieve your goal in a timely fashion; you get everything you're after; you carry +1 forward; the Dark retreats. On a 7-9, you achieve your goal, and choose one from the 10+ list.

## Other Moves

You'll have access to two more sets of moves as well: *role moves*, based on the playbook you select, and *Shadow moves*, which are vampiric superpowers. They're detailed in Chapter Five.

## Edges

Edges represent insights into what makes another character tick, which can be leveraged against them. In order to spend an Edge, you have to declare that you're doing so and say how, exactly, you're exploiting your insight. Once you've spent an Edge, it's gone.

An Edge can be spent to (choose one):

- Add +1 to your roll against that character.
- Subtract -1 from someone's roll against you.
- Force an NPC to act at Disadvantage.
- Force an NPC to falter, freeze up, or hesitate.
- Add 1 extra harm to whatever harm you're dealing someone.
- An NPC can spend an Edge to gain Advantage, in addition to the options above.

### Advantage and Disadvantage

Advantage and Disadvantage are special rules for NPCs. NPC rules are mostly something for the Master to deal with, but in short: When an NPC gains Advantage, they're much more likely to succeed at whatever they're doing, or to get a really good result. When an NPC suffers Disadvantage, they're much more likely to fail, or to have a really rotten result.

## Conditions

Characters can gain Conditions over the course of play. Conditions describe something currently significant about the character, such as *happy*, *enraged*, *frightened*, *poisoned*, *exhausted*, *drunk*, *distracted*, *blinded*, or *blinded by greed*. Most Conditions describe something temporary, but they can also be something permanent like *one armed*. If a basic move tells you to erase a Condition, consider permanent Conditions off limits.

Conditions describe a thing that *must be true in the story*; nothing can happen if it contradicts a Condition. For example, a character with *broken legs* cannot run, and one who is *terrified* cannot display extravagant courage until they've gotten rid of *terrified*.

Characters lose a condition when it makes sense in the story for them to do so, or when a move allows them to. Characters can tag a Condition on themselves or on someone else when they make a move, allowing them to add +1 to their move, but they must describe how they exploit the Condition to their advantage. NPCs can tag a Condition on themselves or someone else to gain Advantage.

If the Master thinks a Condition ought to make something difficult for you but not stop you from doing it altogether, she can tag it against you to give you -1 on your move.

### Staked!

Piercing a vampire's heart with a stake, arrow, or busted-off broom handle is a Condition: *staked*. The repercussions of being *staked* vary from vampire to vampire, but in general, it's not good for them. Sometimes it's *very* not good for them, doing things like paralyzing or even outright destroying them. It's *such* a convenient solution, in fact, that if you want to stake a vampire in the heat of battle when you *fuck them up*, you need to roll a 12+ rather than a 10+, since "give them a Condition" isn't usually supposed to be an instant "I win" maneuver.

## Inflicting Harm

When you hurt someone, you *inflict harm as established by the narrative*. In narrative terms, 1 harm represents transitory but meaningful injury, such as being kicked in the head, slammed through a table, or running full speed through a thorny hedge. 2 harm represents serious injury, like being shot with a pistol, stabbed with a knife, or cracked in the head with a baseball bat. Most attacks with weapons inflict 2 harm. 3 harm represents likely fatal injury: being hit by a truck at high speed, taking a close-range shotgun blast, getting tossed off the top of a parking garage, that sort of thing.

## Suffering Harm

You can suffer up to 4 harm. When you suffer your fourth point of harm, you die. You can choose *not* to die by:

- Erasing all harm and accepting the Condition *badly hurt*; you can't make this choice if you're already *badly hurt*.
- Erasing all harm and accepting a permanent Condition such as *missing eye*, *bad leg*, or *disfiguring scar*, which cannot normally be removed afterwards; you can't make this choice if you've already made it during the current session.
- Becoming *lost to the Hunger* (see p. XX) and erasing all harm. You can't make this choice if you're already lost to the Hunger.
- Giving the fate of your character into the hands of the Master, with *carte blanche* to inflict some sort of interesting tragedy or suffering on them, and then erasing all harm. This is guaranteed not to kill your familiar, or to make them no fun to play, but these are the only guarantees. You can only make this decision if one of the three above it is also potentially possible.

## Recovering From Harm

Familiars are resilient, and the power of the blood patches you up pretty quickly. You erase 1 harm at the end of each scene, or all harm if you take a day off to rest and heal up. Likewise, taking a day to rest and heal up will get rid of *badly injured*.

If you lose access to your blood supply and revert to being merely human (see page XX), things are a bit tougher. You erase 1 harm at the end of each scene during which you didn't undertake any particularly strenuous activity, or at the end of each session in which you didn't get to erase any harm through scenes of taking it easy. You erase all harm after any period of downtime lasting several days during which your character took it easy. You need a period of rest and medical treatment to get rid of *badly injured*.

## Day and Night

At the end of the day, however much vampire blood you may have working its way through you, you're still human, with human needs, moving through a human world. You need money. You need a place to live. You need a sense of safety. You need love.

*After* the end of the day, though? Something dead and hungry wakes up, and it wants things from you. Things that have got nothing to do with holding down a 9 to 5 job, making it to see your kid's school play, or anything else that's part of an ordinary life.

Maybe you think you can fold your two lives together. Maybe you can exist as a kept pet of your patron—but then you're dependent on a monster's purse strings. Maybe you dwell in your master's lair, guarding them during the day. Maybe you seek safety in the shadow of a vampire. Maybe you want to pry love out of an unbeating heart.

The point is, these two lives—the sunlit world of humans and the nocturnal world of the vampire—they're not the same, and even if you're substituting the realities of one to patch holes in the needs of the other, it's still a substitution. Every familiar juggles the elements of their life, and eventually some of the balls are going to drop.

Where your heart falls in the balance between the living and dead sides of your existence is measured by your day and night traits.

Day measures how close you are to your humanity, how easy you find it to blend back into the crowd, how well you've stayed in touch with elements of your life untouched or untainted by blood and shadows. It's also your ability to restrain the darkness now coursing through your veins.

Night is the opposite: it measures how far you've gone into the world of vampires, of murder in dark alleys, of bodies weighed down and tossed into the river, of ancient blood-temples and immortal vendettas. It's also your mastery of the scraps of vampiric power you've been granted.

Like your Attributes, day and night are modifiers that can range anywhere from -3 to +3. They are always mirror opposites of one another. If your day is +1, your night is -1. The only time they ever match is at +0, when you hold the two in delicate equilibrium.

Your starting day and night depend on which *role playbook* you choose (see Chapter Five).

## Breaking Day

People have needs and obligations. They've got to sleep at least a few hours a day, and eat, sure, but they also have *lives*. They visit their brother in the hospital. They pick their kids up from school. They show up for work on time.

They don't, generally speaking, have to balance doing those things with obeying the commands of a vampire, but they also don't have the strength to rip a car door off its hinges or a fast track to immortality. You do. So, you juggle... and sometimes you drop a ball.

Working for a vampire is a lot like having a secret life of crime, often in the very literal sense that your master is going to ask you to *do crimes*, but in the wider general sense that you're going to be doing stuff you can't easily explain. Think about TV shows like *Breaking Bad* or *The Sopranos*. Remember the episode where Tony takes his daughter upstate to look over some college campuses, and slips out in the middle of the trip to murder an old informant who vanished into Witness Protection? That's a rather ghastly example of *attending to the needs of both your lives*. By contrast, think of all the times Walter White blew some promise, appointment, or other obligation and couldn't come up with an a decent excuse because he'd been desperately trying to keep his life of crime under wraps. That's *breaking day*: letting your night-duties fuck up and damage your human life.

When you break day, alter your day/night balance by adding +1 to night and -1 to day. If night's already at +3 and day's at -3, then when you break day, *something has to give*. You lose some part of your human life: your job, your spouse, your driver's license, your apartment, whatever. If you have nothing left to lose... well, you're immune to breaking day. Congratulations, I suppose?

## Breaking Night

Your vampire patron has needs, and they give you obligations, and they expect you to carry them out. They don't usually care how much this fucks your plans up, or if you have any objections. You want blood? You have marching orders.

As mentioned before though, familiars are still *human*: human biological needs, human social needs, human *soul*. Maybe—crazy thought here—you don't actually *want* to torture someone to find out what they know, then chop up their body and dump it in a river to make sure they don't talk, because *holy shit that's evil and fucked up*. Does Dracula give a shit? Dracula does not. But maybe *you* do.

Sometimes you can bend the living shit out of the letter of your master's orders and still carry out the spirit. Maybe you don't torture that guy for information; maybe you blackmail him. And maybe you don't kill him and sink a bunch of little weighted-down coolers into a lake; maybe you scare him so bad he leaves down and never comes back, and, well, you have the information you were supposed to get, and the guy's gone, and your patron never needs to know things didn't go down exactly like they wanted. That's *obeying your master without betraying yourself*. But maybe, you know, you're supposed to be staking out a reporter's house every single night until you find out who it is they're talking to, and it's your 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and you have reservations booked at a restaurant with your spouse and you can only be in one place or the other come 10:00, and you choose your wife over your master, and you miss your window for seeing whatever you were supposed to see and your failure has consequences for your patron. That's *breaking night*: defying the vampire's orders because of your human obligations or ethics, and failing to hide your disobedience.



When you break night, alter your day/night balance by adding +1 to day and -1 to night. If day's already at +3 and night's at -3, then when you break night, you *enrage the vampire*. The consequences of doing that are up to the Master, but they're always going to be unpleasant; having blood withheld is common, lethal displeasure is possible if you make a habit of breaking night.

## Shifting Day and Night

In addition to breaking day and night, you can also dedicate yourself to paying more attention to your human or nocturnal duties for a while. If your roleplaying between one advance and the next supports it, you can spend an advance to shift your day/night balance by +/- 1.

## The Dark

A vampire's ageless power courses through your veins, and while this makes you buff and gives you cool powers, it also means there's a primordial, ancient nastiness creeping around in your flesh, in your heart, in your mind. Most of the time you don't notice it, or at least, you tell yourself you don't. But it's there, rising and falling. The Dark. It's part of you now.

Certain events may cause *the Dark to advance*, including but definitely not limited to partial successes on a number of standard moves. When the Dark advances, make a mark on your record sheet to indicate it. If the Dark advances five times, then you are *lost in the Dark*, and the turbulent nightmare-existence of a vampire fills you with feral, terrifying compulsions. You must immediately resist either the Hunger or the Terror, depending on the circumstances which caused you to become lost in the Dark. While lost, any further advances of the Dark will necessitate additional Hunger or Terror rolls, but won't add further marks.

In addition to the goads present in the basic moves, you must define one circumstance of particular stress and difficulty that, when you encounter it, causes the Dark to advance. Potential examples include:

- Being humiliated.
- Being deliberately thwarted in your efforts.
- Performing an action you consider degrading.
- Realizing that a loved one is in pain or danger.
- Indulging in drugs or alcohol.
- Discovering that someone has lied to you.

Just as the Dark can advance until it envelops you, it can also be forced to retreat until you're untroubled by it. When *the Dark retreats*, erase one mark indicating that it has advanced toward engulfing you. The basic moves provide a number of ways to force the Dark to retreat, and when you manage to get full and restful sleep, remove three marks of the Dark from your sheet.

## The Hunger

When you become lost in the Dark in a moment of stress, anger, frustration, or aggression, you find yourself in a place of teeth and inhuman appetite; a place of killing intent, a hunting-place. This is not the thirst a vampire feels for living blood, but only the shadow of that thirst, and it's like being hollowed out and filled with a need to kill and devour. This is the Hunger.

When you're lost to the Hunger, you gain the Condition *ravenous* and ignore all drawbacks and limitations from any other Conditions you may possess. You will lash out violently at anyone and anything nearby without regard for friend or foe, although the first and foremost target of your attacks will generally be whoever or whatever caused you to be lost to the Hunger. After that, you prefer hostile targets over passive or fleeing ones, and those nearby over those far away. The Condition doesn't end until there's nobody else present for you to attack, or until you've killed someone or something and eaten a few bloody chunks of them.

## Fending off the Hunger

To avoid becoming lost to the Hunger, roll with day. On a 10+, you aren't lost to the Hunger, and the Dark retreats. On a 7-9, you aren't lost to the Hunger. On a miss, you're lost to the Hunger.

There *is* one other alternative: Embracing the Hunger, and trying to guide rather than resist it. If you seek to do so, roll with night. On a 10+, you embrace the Hunger, and when it ends the Dark retreats. On a 7-9, you embrace the Hunger. On a miss, you're lost to the Hunger. When you embrace the Hunger, you're still restricted to actions of bloodthirsty destruction, but can decide who to attack in which order, and can even spend a few moments, *once* during your rampage, smashing furniture and otherwise venting your rage upon the scenery to give your allies a few precious moments to escape (they take +1 forward or gain Advantage to *cut and run* during this brief window).

## The Terror

When you become lost in the Dark in a moment of fear, panic, or overwhelming danger, you find yourself in a place of distorted echoes, cold creeping shadows, and the yawning promise of damnation; a haunted place, a place of horror. This is the pit above which every vampire has suspended itself, walking the tightrope of eternity. This is the Terror.

When you're lost to the Terror, gain the Condition *blind panic* and ignore all drawbacks and limitations from any other Conditions you may possess. You will attempt to escape from whatever provoked the Terror at all costs, and the Condition doesn't end until you can no longer detect any sign of whatever triggered it.

## Resisting the Terror

To avoid becoming lost to the Terror, you cleave to the warmth of your living soul. Roll with day. On a 10+, you aren't lost to the Terror, and the Dark retreats. On a 7-9, you aren't lost to the Terror. On a miss, you're lost to the Terror.

## Being a Familiar (Or Not)

Familiars inherit a bit of their vampire patron's power, but also a seething darkness within and an addiction to the blood. The good news is that you're not trapped in this nightmare cycle of dependence, exploitation, and blood forever. It's possible to walk away.

The bad news is that you're not *secure* in this nightmare cycle, either. It's possible to be *thrown* away. Being a familiar is a temporary condition.

You become a familiar when you drink a vampire's blood, gaining all the benefits of your new condition immediately. But it doesn't last. When nothing's going on, when you're alone and even your thoughts aren't really keeping you occupied, you can feel that ancient power sizzling

away, slowly evaporating. And when it's gone... well, when it's gone, you're only human. Same as everyone else, once again, except you know what it feels like to be *something more* and every cell in your body cries out to get it back.

You can't set your calendar by how long a dose of vampire blood will keep you a familiar, but broadly speaking it's *about a month*. It trends to a bit longer if you got blood from a very old or powerful vampire, or were given an extra-large dose, and to a bit shorter (sometimes as little as 26 days) if your patron was stingy with the blood, or is only newly-turned, but in general: about a month. You always know when your time's getting short, too. It's a feeling of mounting distress, eventually becoming full-blown panic as the final night arrives.

In short, you probably don't want to let the clock run out. Best keep your patron happy, so they'll keep you in blood.

## Vamped Out

If you become an ex-familiar you lose access to all Shadow moves, all special perks of being a familiar such as enhanced strength and fast healing—all of it. You lose the Dark, too, and don't have to worry about the Hunger or the Terror anymore; that's something. Unfortunately, what you *don't* lose is your addiction to the blood, and if you've been a familiar for a long time, you might have... other issues.

## Vampire Blood

So: Drink the blood, gain the power of the blood. Keep in the vampire's good graces, keep that power. But what about those times when your master sends you far away? What do you do if your patron takes an interest in rumors of an ancient blood-temple in Sumatra, but *doesn't* take an interest in visiting in person, and sends you off on an expedition abroad?

The good news is that once a vampire's blood leaves its body, if there's about a test tube's worth of the stuff all together, it doesn't coagulate and dry out like mortal blood as long as you take even a halfassed effort to preserve it. (Capping a glass vial works fine, as does stopping up a bottle with wax or cork.) This means that *if* you can stockpile the blood, you can lay in a supply of doses for emergencies, and they'll stay good indefinitely. Of course, vampires know this, and they usually like keeping their servants on a short leash.

There are other reasons vampires are reluctant to trust a group of blood addicts to manage their own supply, as well. Creating a familiar isn't the only possible use for vampire blood. If you drink a dose when you're already a familiar, you have to make an immediate choice: whether to use that draught "resetting" your countdown, or to do... something else.

### Getting Blood by Force

Vampire blood is a huge pain in the ass to get out of a vampire if it's not cooperating. They don't really *bleed* when cut or shot or whatever. Oh, sure, you might get a splat of blood on the wall when the bullets come through, or a spray as you whack them with a fire ax, but the wounds don't leak blood everywhere like a living person's does. In general, if you want to get a dose's worth of blood out of a vampire, you need to draw it out with something like a syringe, open up a major artery (and even then it only sort of drizzles out), or get the vampire to bleed voluntarily. They bleed just fine when they *want* to bleed.

## Fast Healing

You can drink a draught of vampire blood to make your wounds heal up in seconds rather than minutes or hours. Roll with night. On a 10+, you immediately erase 3 harm *or* get rid of the Condition *badly injured*. On a 7-9, you immediately erase 2 harm *or* get rid of the Condition *badly injured*. On a miss, you immediately erase 1 harm.

## Cure an Ailment

You can draw upon the power of vampire blood to cure an illness, disease, or similar affliction; these are usually expressed as a permanent or permanent-ish Condition like *lung cancer*, *tuberculosis*, or *leprosy*. Roll with night after drinking. On a 10+, erase the Condition: you're cured. On a 7-9, draw a line through the Condition as you force it into remission. Your Condition will become no worse, doesn't actively trouble you most of a time (Disasters are good moments for an exception to crop up), and if the affliction was formerly contagious, it isn't for now—but it's still *there*, and will continue progressing if you become mortal again. On a miss, the blood's wasted.

## Power Up

You can use a draught of vampire blood to empower yourself rather than extending your time as a familiar. For the next 24 hours you can use one Shadow move that you don't actually have, and you gain 2 Blood Potency (see p. XX).

## Regenerate a Missing Limb

You can use the power of the blood to regrow or repair a severed or mangled body part. Such afflictions are normally expressed as a permanent Condition like *one arm, missing eye*, or *paraplegic*. Drink the blood and roll with night. On a 10+, erase the Condition; your body agonizingly regrows or repairs the affected body part over the course of the next hour. On a 7-9, erase the Condition, but gain the Condition *exhausted* for the next several days; your body agonizingly regrows or repairs the affected body part over a span of several hours, leaving you completely drained of energy for days afterwards. On a miss, the blood is wasted.

## Blood Addiction

Vampire blood is *good shit*. On one level, it's... not a pleasant-tasting substance. It's fundamentally *blood*, and humans aren't really know for guzzling blood recreationally. But it carries with it a tangible rush of *power*, and *that* can be addictive. Addicts—like you—often rationalize that into synesthetic delusions such as a “taste like red ambrosia.” Eventually, your body interprets every taste of the blood as a fresh delight.

Addiction to vampire blood is a near-inevitability among familiars. Three drinks over three nights is guaranteed to do it, and it doesn't matter how far you space those nights apart. You develop the Condition *addicted to vampire blood*, and once that happens, you spend a fair bit of your time jonesing for that next draught of the Big V. If you're entrusted with vials or bottles of your master's blood, rationing out your supply becomes difficult. A *smart* familiar with extra blood on hand saves it up until the power of their last dose is almost up, to maximize their supply. If you're *addicted to vampire blood*, though, you have to *stand your ground* every few days to avoid chugging a dose as soon as the opportunity presents itself. You might even have to *stand your ground* to avoid doing something stupid if an obvious opportunity to pursue a drink drops itself into your lap in some other fashion.

Breaking the addiction is simple: go cold turkey. It takes about a year, and for the last three months of that you've got the Condition *suffering from withdrawal*, which makes your every waking hour feel like a slow motion trip through Hell and your sleep into a nightmare jaunt into landscapes of fangs, darkness, and red bliss taunting you just out of reach.

## Rented Immortality

Here's an underappreciated perk of being a familiar: you don't get older as long as the power of the blood's coursing through you. Yes, through the unholy power of vampire blood, you can live (truly *live*, mind you, long-walks-on-a-sunny-beach and all) forever without actually becoming a vampire.

The catch, of course, is that the power can run out, and when it does, you resume aging... with interest. You age at ten times the normal rate until you reach your true chronological age. If you've only been a familiar for a few months, you probably won't even notice time catching up to you. If you've been on the blood for a couple of decades, then you're going to age twenty years over the course of two. That's really not good. And if you look 40 but are actually *140* years old, well, let's just say you'd better get a new blood hookup well before time catches up with you.

If you're *truly ancient*, somewhere north of two centuries, losing the power of the blood makes you age a year *every day*. Past even that... well, let's just say that if you and your master both know how to speak Phoenician with a native accent, and your supply ever runs out, expect an impromptu re-enactment of the scene from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* where that Nazi asshole drinks out of the wrong grail. That's well outside the scope of a normal game, of course, but it's also the reason why most familiars are eager to move up from conditional immortality to the real deal.

## Unholy Strength

As soon as you become a familiar, you become preternaturally strong. Not *superhero* strong, but at least "big angry bouncer" strong. So long as you're a familiar, you have Condition *unholy strength*.

## The Shadows of Dark Miracles

Vampires evidence all kinds of amazing powers. Controlling minds. Running like the wind. Turning into mist. You can't do all those things, but sometimes a faint echo of your patron's power trickles down to you. With practice and effort you can master the bare shadows of your master's dark miracles.

These powers are detailed in Chapter Five.

## Experience

At the end of each session of play, get 2 experience.

When you *turn a move into a disaster* (see page XX) get 1 experience.

Certain moves can give you experience.

Finally, at the beginning of each session, each player except for the Master takes the sheet of the player on their left and puts a little mark on an Attribute of their choice, as long as it isn't the character's highest Attribute. Mark an Attribute that you'd like to see that character demonstrate

during the coming session. The first time during the session that you make a move with your marked Attribute, get 1 experience and then erase the mark. If the end of the session arrives and you still have the mark, erase it then.

When you accumulate 10 experience, you can take an *advance* at the end of the session, and then erase all experience. Advances are detailed in the playbooks in Chapter Five.